



ACSA NEWS

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ACSA Mission Statement

To advance architectural education through support of member schools, their faculty, and students. This support involves:

- Serving by encouraging dialogue among the diverse areas of discipline;
- Facilitating teaching, research, scholarly and creative works, through intra/interdisciplinary activity;
- Articulating the critical issues forming the context of architectural education;
- Fostering public awareness of architectural education and issues of importance.

This advancement shall be implemented through five primary means: advocacy, annual program activities, liaison with collateral organizations, dissemination of information and response to the needs of member schools in order to enhance the quality of life in a global society.

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from the president

RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND THE CULTURE OF STUDIO

BY KIM TANZER



"Two classic Alice themes emerge...first, relying on friends, never doing anything alone; and second...producing an effect of apparent simplicity that is underlain by layers of experiment and subtlety."

The description above summarizes the way Alice Waters—proprietor, hostess, chef, and menu planner at Chez Panisse; co-inventor of California cuisine; promoter of the Slow Food Movement in the United States; advocate of local sourcing of food at Yale University and beyond—and her team worked their magic.

The book *Alice Waters and Chez Panisse* describes how Waters, while acknowledged to be the maestro at Chez Panisse, is far from a heroic individualist. Instead, she works with a group of friends-turned-colleagues to pursue a vision which incorporates the experience of dining, the taste of fresh food, and an unexpected combination of ingredients, served by people who care as much about each other as about designing peak food experiences. Over 25 years they reinvented their supply chain, offered employee benefits unheard of in the restaurant industry then or now, and, through daily collaborative research, invented a new type of cuisine. Chez Panisse is legendary, not because of these "back of house" issues,

but because it is recognized internationally as one of the very best dining experiences in the country.

I happened to be reading about Alice Waters and Chez Panisse as I began working with the AIAAS leadership to evaluate studio culture policies across the US, and began seeing similarities between this extraordinary, food-research collaborative and the best examples of studio culture policies. The best policies use a simple NAAB requirement to paint a picture of the value of the design studio. They situate the studio historically and within their institutions. They explain the importance of collaboration, the necessity of respect for all team members, and the need to value all aspects of students' lives, not just their commitment to studio. These policies tell the story of design as we all love it, through simple documents which they disseminate to entering students as a rite of passage. The best studio culture policies turn a tedious accreditation requirement into a balanced narrative celebrating the value and culture of the studio experience.

In the same way that Chez Panisse is not just a restaurant, many of us understand that studio is not just a class or a classroom, but a remarkable environment. We have experienced the productive group-think that emerges when a group of bright, talented design students turn their attention to a well-crafted design question, considered through spec-making and communicated through drawings, models, and animations. The luckiest among us, studio teachers, are given the opportunity to raise such questions once or more every semester, and to have the assistance of our students in developing responses. At a fundamental level, through the studio, our students help us learn.

At this spring's ACSA Annual Meeting in Houston we hosted a panel discussion